

In order to confirm that the Senate is prepared to begin business in the second session of the 106th Congress, I now suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUNNING). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WELCOME TO SENATORS AND STAFF

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I join the majority leader in welcoming back our colleagues, the President pro tempore, our Chaplain, and our staff. I think we all had a wonderful break. It is good to be back and see so many friendly faces.

The majority leader and I had a good conversation earlier today and discussed a number of matters to be addressed in the early days of this session of Congress. I look forward to working with him and with our colleagues as we begin this second session of the 106th Congress.

I might inquire, has the majority leader finished? I didn't want to interrupt.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, if I could respond to the distinguished Democratic leader, if he wishes to make a statement at this time that would be fine, but we need to establish a quorum so we can notify the President that the Senate is ready to work.

The Senator can make his statement now or we can establish a quorum.

Mr. DASCHLE. Why don't we establish the quorum and I will comment later.

QUORUM CALL

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KYL). The clerk will call the roll to ascertain the presence of a quorum.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll and the following Senators entered the Chamber and answered to their names:

[Quorum No. 1]

Ashcroft	Fitzgerald	Nickles
Baucus	Frist	Reed
Bennett	Grams	Reid
Bingaman	Hagel	Robb
Bryan	Hollings	Roberts
Bunning	Hutchinson	Santorum
Byrd	Jeffords	Sessions
Campbell	Kennedy	Snowe
Cochran	Kyl	Specter
Collins	Landrieu	Stevens
Craig	Lautenberg	Thomas
Daschle	Levin	Thompson
DeWine	Lott	Thurmond
Dodd	Lugar	Voinovich
Domenici	Mack	Warner
Dorgan	McConnell	Wyden
Enzi	Moynihan	
Feinstein	Murkowski	

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be

dispensed with. I believe we have established a quorum and can proceed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. A quorum is present.

NOTIFYING THE PRESIDENT THE SENATE IS READY TO PROCEED TO BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I send a resolution to the desk notifying the President of the United States that the Senate is now ready to proceed to business, and I ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will state the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 242) notifying the President the Senate is ready to proceed to business.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

There being no objection, the resolution (S. Res. 242) was agreed to, as follows:

S. RES. 242

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate inform the President of the United States that a quorum of the Senate is assembled and that the Senate is ready to proceed to business.

NOTIFYING THE HOUSE THAT THE SENATE IS READY TO PROCEED TO BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I send a resolution to the desk notifying the House that the Senate is now ready to proceed to business, and I ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will state the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 243) notifying the House the Senate is ready to proceed to business.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

There being no objection, the resolution (S. Res. 243) was agreed to, as follows:

S. RES. 243

Resolved, That the Secretary inform the House of Representatives that a quorum of the Senate is assembled and that the Senate is ready to proceed to business.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent there be a period for the transaction of morning business until 6 p.m., with Members permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I believe the Democratic leader will be here momentarily. Senator DASCHLE had started to make a speech earlier when we first started the quorum call. I believe he will be here momentarily to deliver his remarks. I call on other Senators who have been prepared to make remarks. I believe Senator MACK and perhaps several others would like to make remarks before the Senate concludes business today. I am glad we have established a quorum and are now ready to proceed.

I again remind Senators we will be in session on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week. They should expect votes possibly during the day on Tuesday and possibly several votes on Wednesday.

It is our hope at this time that we can reach an agreement on how to proceed on the bankruptcy bill and we will be able to get an agreement on that and complete that bill which was carried over from the first session of this 106th Congress, and hopefully we could finish it by Wednesday night. There has been an indication, I believe on both sides of the aisle, we hope we could do that. So that would be our desire.

With regard to the matter of the young boy from Cuba, Elian Gonzalez, again what happens there will depend on events. Senator MACK will surely speak to that when he arrives in the Chamber.

Then at some point next week we will initiate proceedings on the nuclear waste bill also.

Those would be the first three issues we have pending before us. We will confer with the Democratic leadership and work on the bills that will be considered after that.

Mr. President, since Senator DASCHLE has not arrived just yet, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—S. 1999

Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I send a bill to the desk and ask for its first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows: A bill (S. 1999) for the private relief of Elian Gonzalez Brotons.

Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I now ask for its second reading.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I then ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business.

ELIAN GONZALEZ

Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce a bill granting Elian Gonzalez American citizenship.

What it means is that the most important decision in this young boy's life will not be made by a political bureaucracy—but by a family court.

Mr. President, neither the President of the United States, his Attorney General, nor the dictator ruling Cuba is qualified to decide the fate of this little boy. The United States is a country of laws, and we zealously believe in the rule of law. Elian deserves access to the legal protections of our family courts. These courts are in the business of considering family cases day after day. And they would consider “what is in the boy's best interest.” Today, the only concern of the INS is “who speaks for the boy,” not about his future.

The primary purpose of this legislation is to ensure Elian has access to America's family courts: a court that will consider the choice that his mother made when she gave her life for freedom.

Mr. President, we will continue this debate sometime later in the week and make no mistake, I believe that Elian should remain here in the United States where he can live in freedom. But it is not my purpose to make that decision; that is the function of a family court.

This bill is intended to allow a family court to settle this dispute based upon the best interests of Elian Gonzalez.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who seeks time? The minority leader.

SECOND SESSION OF THE 106TH CONGRESS

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, let me again welcome our colleagues back. I had the opportunity this morning to discuss the schedule and the many mutual matters of concern with the majority leader. Let me again welcome back our staff and express heartfelt appreciation for the great job that so many of our people have done over the last couple of months while we have been gone. I welcome our colleagues back not only to a new session but a new year, a new century, and a new millennium.

As we begin this new year, Americans have every reason to be proud and optimistic. In the last decade of the last century, we saw freedom and de-

mocracy triumph around the globe. We saw Eastern Europe abandon communism and the Soviet Union disintegrate. We saw Nelson Mandela walk out of prison and into history as the first democratically elected President of the new South Africa.

Here at home we restored strength to America's economy. We started the last decade with the biggest budget deficits in our Nation's history, and we ended it with the biggest budget surplus. We have seen more than 20 million new jobs created in the last 7 years. Today we have the lowest unemployment in 40 years, and the lowest unemployment ever among African Americans and Hispanics. Americans are working again.

Finally, after 20 years, real wages for America's families are growing again. Family incomes are up, and inflation is virtually nonexistent.

We also made progress in the last decade on the many social problems that some people thought were intractable. Since 1993, we have seen a 48-percent decrease in the welfare rolls, the largest decline in our Nation's history. We put 100,000 new police officers on the street, and today the violent crime rate is the lowest it has been in a generation. We enacted the single largest investment in children's health since 1965 and the largest increases in higher education since the GI bill. Today our Nation is prospering, and we are at peace.

The question facing us as we begin this new session of Congress, this first session of the 21st century, is: How do we keep America moving in the right direction? How do we provide the leadership that will help continue the global march toward freedom and democracy?

Here at home, how do we keep our economy growing? How do we help ordinary Americans provide for their families and prepare for their future? How do we widen the circle of opportunity to include those who have been left out up until now?

There are many, frankly, who believe we will not answer those questions this year. They look at how little we accomplished last year and the fact that this is a Presidential year and conclude that little or nothing will happen between now and November. It does not have to be that way.

A month ago, a lot of people thought the Y2K bug might cause all kinds of chaos. Instead, almost nothing happened. When it comes to us, when it comes to this Congress, people expect nothing to happen this year. Why not surprise them? We have extraordinary opportunities to do significant work this year, and we should work together to seize those opportunities.

Let's not worry about who gets the credit. Let's worry about getting the job done.

If the best minds in this country could work together to kill the Y2K

bug, surely the best minds in the Senate can work together this year to protect Social Security, to modernize Medicare, and to pass a real Patients' Bill of Rights. We can work together to improve our children's schools. Working together, surely we can find new ways to help ordinary working families earn more and keep more of what they earn.

There are all kinds of reasons for inaction, but there is not one good excuse. Henry Ford once said, “You can't build a reputation on what you are going to do.”

You cannot construct much of an argument for governing either just talking about what you are going to do. Eventually, one has to act.

I believe there are essentially three challenges facing us this year. If we meet these challenges, I believe, frankly, that it will be good for both of our parties next November. Good policy, as they say, is good politics.

More importantly, if we meet these challenges, it will be good for America, for our economy, for our families, and certainly for our future.

Our first challenge is to maintain our fiscal discipline. Later this week, we expect new estimates from CBO and OMB about how large the surplus might be in the year 2010. We do not know today what their predictions will be, but we do know today that the best first use of whatever surplus we have is to protect Social Security and strengthen Medicare.

Now—when our economy is strong, when we have a surplus, when we still have time on our side—is the time to prepare for the baby boomers' retirement by extending the life of the Social Security trust fund. Now is the time to modernize Medicare and add the prescription drug benefit so people do not have to choose between filling prescriptions and paying utility bills. That is an essential part of maintaining fiscal discipline.

Maintaining fiscal discipline also means paying down our \$5 trillion national debt. Mr. President, \$2,200 is how much our national debt will cost every family in America this year. Think what a family could do with that much money.

My colleagues and I support tax cuts that help working families with real, pressing needs such as child care and paying for college and caring for sick and aging relatives. We support eliminating the marriage penalty tax for couples who pay a marriage penalty. We support tax cuts that help small businesses grow and make it easier to keep family businesses in families.

We want to work with our friends on the other side of the aisle to pass responsible, targeted tax cuts this year, but we all know what the best tax cut is. The best tax cut for America's families and America's businesses is to pay down the Federal debt.